

23 October 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant Deputy Director (Administration)  
SUBJECT: CIA Machine Methods Research Projects

1. Introduction

a. Information has been given to me informally regarding certain CIA activities in the general area of machine records research development. The observations indicate there is a strong possibility that this Agency may needlessly expend funds in the development of a new program, a portion of which will closely parallel and possibly duplicate in part work which the Agency has supported for several years.

2. Problem

a. CIA/OSI is presently subsidizing research experiments for the development of a machine indexing system. The essential purpose of this system is to index vast amounts of coded information in so precise a manner as to permit its location by machine for immediate retrieval of the basic document or volume.

b. Reputedly, CIA/OGD is contemplating a project for the development of a document filing system whereby vast amounts of printed material can be reduced to very small size for filing purposes.

c. It is apparent that these two programs have, or may ultimately have, at least one factor in common; i.e., the reduction filing system must be correlated with a suitable indexing system before the material can be filed in order that immediate location and recovery can be accomplished. Both activities, therefore, will presumably have the common problem of coding and indexing materials for immediate retrieval of the master document or original source. Presumably, there is the further possibility that information contained in any given document could be coded and indexed in a manner which would permit the location of information contained in any given document as well as providing for the retrieval of the document as a whole.

d. The problem, therefore, is whether these two activities should not be coordinated at this time in order to prevent:

- (1) Duplication of research already performed on the machine indexing project.
- (2) The ultimate development of two separate indexing systems which would, in all probability, prevent the common use of filing and retrieval facilities.

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- (3) Overlooking the apparent benefit of applying the document reduction and filing system to materials being coded and indexed in the OSI indexing program.

3. Background

a. The original studies in the current CIA/OSI Machine Indexing Project were conducted by the [REDACTED]

25X1A [REDACTED]. Later, [REDACTED] became interested and constructed the experimental machines. It was at about this time that CIA became interested and began making subsidy contributions to the further development of the research. Recently, the experiments were brought to Washington to continue the research under CIA subsidization, and the individuals who were conducting the studies at [REDACTED] were engaged by CIA under contract to continue the studies here.

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b. The nature of the project became known to various private organizations prior to the inception of CIA interest, and, therefore, the individuals involved became known as the persons primarily responsible for the development. These observations were made to me by an individual who is currently under contract to CIA for the purpose of conducting the experiments and research in the development of the OSI machine indexing system. At a recent convention of the American Chemical Society, he was approached and queried regarding the current status of the program by a member of a private corporation who is presumably unaware of CIA's current interest in the machine indexing project. The CIA affiliate was informed that this private corporation has been approached by a government agency, (presumably CIA) and requested to give consideration to a program for the development of the document filing system. The individual who made the inquiry felt that his company could profit from an exchange of information with the machine indexing people. He is concerned that his company may spend needless time and waste government money in research toward the development of a program, a portion of which has been under development for some time in another connection.

c. It was assumed by the CIA affiliate that the new program might be under consideration by this Agency and, therefore, he sought to find a way in which information from his project might easily be made available to those responsible for the program under consideration. Also, he hoped to be able to obtain the benefit of the thinking and developmental research which might so closely parallel the work of his group. He has relayed this information in anticipation of the possibility that the relationship between the two programs might not have been considered by the Agency to date.

d. It is to be emphasized that the consideration of duplication and waste is purely potential at this time. The conviction that there is this potential is expressed by private individuals whose interests are completely diverse from Agency interests, except that they will be spending Agency funds.

4. Recommendation

a. If the relationship between the two programs has not yet been considered, it would seem desirable that there should be a thorough investigation by the Agency with a view toward correlation of some of the machine research projects and coordination between the Agency units concerned in order to avoid:

- (1) The potential duplication of research effort.
- (2) The possible similarity and relationship of the result.
- (3) The consideration of value to be derived from interchange of information, and
- (4) The possible needless expenditure of Agency funds.

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